The system of government in Britain and Russia



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## Introduction

In 2011 I graduated from Moscow State University where I studied public administration. Now my job has very little to do with governmental issues, but I am still very much interested in politics and current social events, that is why I chose “The system of government in Britain and Russia” topic for my final project.

To start with I would like to mention that there are two kinds of system of government in the world nowadays – a monarchy and a republic.

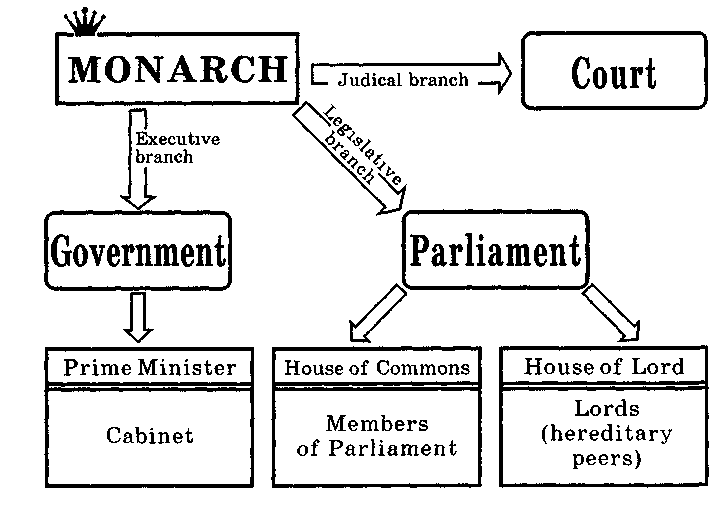
Most common system of government for today’s European countries is a constitutional monarchy or limited monarchy, in which governing powers of the monarch are restricted.

A republic might be described as a sovereign state or country which is organised with a form of government in which power resides in elected individuals representing the citizen body and government leaders exercise power according to the rule of law.

The UK is a [constitutional monarchy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy) and the [Russian Federation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia) is a federal presidential republic. At the present time these two systems do not differ so much, as they used to. The reigning monarch in Britain is no longer a real head of the state, but more the symbol of the unity of the nation, and the President of Russia might be reelected and be in power for longer time than some of the monarchs were. Nevertheless, the specific conditions of life and historical background in Britain and in Russia made political systems of these countries rather different.

## The system of government in Britain

The [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) is a [unitary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unitary_state) governed within the framework of a [constitutional monarchy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy), in which the [Monarch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchy_of_the_United_Kingdom) is the [head of state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_of_state) and the [Prime Minister of the United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_the_United_Kingdom) is the [head of government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_of_government).



[Executive power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Executive_power)is exercised by [Her Majesty's Government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_the_United_Kingdom), on behalf of and by the consent of the Monarch, as well as by the [devolved](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devolution) Governments of [Scotland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Government) and [Wales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_Assembly_Government), and the [Northern Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland) Executive. The chief executive of the government is the Prime Minister. He or she is the leader of the party that holds the most seats in the House of Commons. The monarch goes through the ceremony of selecting as prime minister the person from the House of Commons who is head of the majority party. The prime minister presides over the Cabinet and selects the other Cabinet members, who join him or her to form the government that is part of the functioning executive. Acting through the Cabinet and in the name of the monarch, the prime minister exercises all of the theoretical powers of the crown, including making appointments

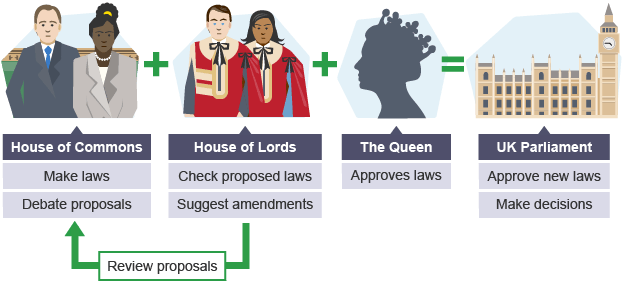


[Legislative power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislative_power) is vested in the two chambers of the [Parliament of the United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_the_United_Kingdom), **the** [**House of Commons**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Commons_of_the_United_Kingdom) and **the** [**House of Lords**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Lords), as well as in **the** [**Scottish parliament**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_parliament) and [**Welsh**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Assembly_for_Wales) and [**Northern Ireland assemblies**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland_Assembly).



The Commons is publicly elected. The party with the largest number of members in the Commons forms the government. Members of the Commons (MPs) debate the big political issues of the day and proposals for new laws. It is one of the key places where government ministers, like the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, and the principal figures of the main political parties, work. The Commons alone is responsible for making decisions on financial Bills, such as proposed new taxes. The Lords can consider these Bills but cannot block or amend them.

The House of Lords is the second chamber of the UK Parliament. It is independent from, and complements the work of, the elected House of Commons. The Lords shares the task of making and shaping laws and checking and challenging the work of the government.

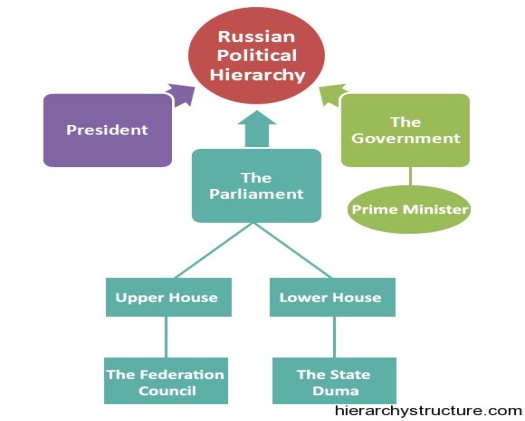


The [judiciary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judiciary) is independent of the executive and the legislature. The highest court is the [Supreme Court of the United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_the_United_Kingdom). The judges of the [Supreme Court of the United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_the_United_Kingdom) are known as Justices of the Supreme Court, and they are also [Privy Counsellors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Privy_Council_of_the_United_Kingdom). Justices of the Supreme Court are granted the courtesy title Lord or Lady for life. For historical reasons, as a state made up of several separate jurisdictions, the United Kingdom does not have a single unified legal system. Instead, there is one system for England and Wales, another for Scotland, and a third for Northern Ireland. In most cases, The Supreme Court sits above all of these as the final court of appeal.



## The system of government in Russia

The politics of Russia takes place in the framework of a [federal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation) [semi-presidential](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semi-presidential_system) [republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic).



According to the [Constitution of Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Russia), the [President of Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_Russia) is the head of state and is elected by popular vote every six years for a maximum of two consecutive terms. The President’s working residence is in the Moscow Kremlin. The President determines the basic domestic and foreign policy, and is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, can veto legislative bills, resolves issues of citizenship of the Russian Federation, awards state decorations and grants pardons.



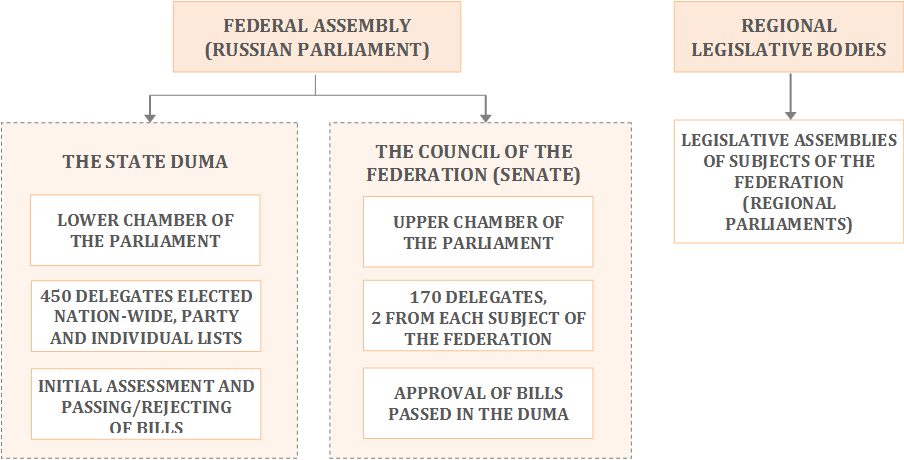
[Executive power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Executive_power)is exercised by the government, headed by the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation, who is appointed by the President with the parliament's approval. Government duties are split between a number of ministries, some of which, in turn, have federal services and federal agencies answerable to them. The head of government, the prime minister, is appointed by the president and confirmed by the State Duma.



[Legislative power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislative_power) is vested in the [two houses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicameralism) of the [Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Assembly_of_the_Russian_Federation) (the Parliament of the Russian Federation). The Assembly comprises two chambers: the State Duma(lower chamber)



and the Council of the Federation(upper chamber). All responsibilities and authority of the Assembly are distributed between these two chambers. The chambers operate separately, but they gather for hearing of the President’s messages, messages of the Constitutional Court and messages of heads of foreign countries.



Each of 85 subjects of the Federation has also own regional legislative body, which is typically called Legislative Assembly. There are separate elections to regional legislative assemblies.

## The State Duma

The State Duma is the lower house of the Russian Parliament. The 450 deputies are elected for terms of five years following constitutional amendments agreed by parliament late in 2008. However, the original term of four years will apply to the current Duma, as the new rules do not come into effect until after the next election.  Any Russian citizen over the age of 21 is eligible to run. Half the seats used to be filled through proportional representation and the other half through single seat constituencies. Now the system has changed.

The 2007 parliamentary election used a new format whereby all deputies were elected from party-lists through proportional representation.

All bills, even those proposed by the Federation Council, must first be considered by the State Duma. Once a bill is passed by a majority in the Duma, a draft law is sent back to the Federation Council. If the Council rejects it, the two chambers may form a commission to work out a compromise.

## The Council of the Federation

The Council of the Federation is the upper house of the Russian Parliament. Created by the 1993 constitution, it was to act as a voice of Russia’s federated entities. The Council has explicitly stated that no political factions are to exist in the upper house.

Unlike the State Duma, the Council isn’t directly elected. It consists of representatives of Russia’s federal entities – each has two. One is elected by the entity’s legislature; the other is nominated by the entity’s head. The terms of the members aren’t nationally fixed, but depend on the terms of the regional bodies that chose them.

The Council works with the lower chamber to complete and vote on draft laws. But the Council of the Federation also has special powers of its own, including the declaration of a presidential election, impeachment of the President and decisions on the use of the armed forces outside Russia’s territory.

## The Judiciary

Three types of court make up the Russian judiciary:

* The courts of general jurisdiction (including military courts), subordinated to the Supreme Court;
* He arbitration court system under the High Court of Arbitration;
* The Constitutional Court (as well as constitutional courts in a number of federal entities)

The municipal court is the lowest adjudicating body in the general court system. It serves each city or rural district and hears more than 90 per cent of all civil and criminal cases. The next level of courts of general jurisdiction is the regional courts. At the highest level is the Supreme Court. Decisions of the lower trial courts can generally be appealed only to the immediately superior court.

Arbitration courts are in practice specialized courts which resolve property and commercial disputes between economic agents. The highest level of court resolving economic disputes is the High Court of Arbitration.

The Constitutional Court is empowered to rule on whether or not laws or presidential decrees are constitutional. If it finds that a law is unconstitutional, the law becomes unenforceable and governmental agencies are barred from implementing it. The judges of the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the Higher Arbitration Court are appointed by the parliament’s upper house, the Federation Council.



## Conclusion

To my opinion both systems – British and Russian might be described as democratic, with well-known attributes of any democracy, such as separation of powers, freedom of speech, elective authorities and etc.

Although some features of both types might look not that democratic at all. For British system - it’s The House of Lords, which members are not elected, but appointed and the membership might be inherited. At the same time in Russia the process of president's elections and legitimisation takes place almost independently from the logic of party system, but in most democratic countries candidates for presidency are usually first chosen inside the parties and only then they compete for the job at the national level.

Other things which appear while comparing political systems are traditions and values. British are known to be conservative, so is the British political system, based on traditions and deep respect for the past with its old line. The monarchy is Britain’s oldest secular institution, its continuity for over 1000 years (broken only once by a republic that lasted a mere 11 years 1649-60). And only occasionally has there been debates about the existence of the monarchy itself.

To the contrast Russian political life has been “vulnerable” for years and decades taking in concern the revolutions, brutal reprisals, the collapse of the Soviet Union and “Naughty Nineties” in 20th century. And now the Russian system of government for sure has its legislative framework, but doesn`t yet has its own worked out use, which is important for stability and perfection. For example, the Russian Parliament: compared to British, founded in 13th century, is quite a youngster. The Russian Duma, founded in 1906, didn’t survive the 1917 revolution. And it bounced back only in 1993, when Russia’s first President, Boris Yeltsin, introduced a new constitution. So the Russian Government system is just making the first step on the road of shaping in comparison with well-formed British one.

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